



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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CHAPTER



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VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE

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1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

CONCEPT DEFINITION

National strategy/ framework for volunteering

Overall, the significance of volunteering for many different sectors - sport and recreation in particular - is recognised by different stakeholders in Finland. In 2007, the Finnish government set up a new committee to enhance cooperation between civil society and public administration (Kansalaisyhteiskuntapolitiikan neuvottelukunta, KANE).

A new version of this committee will be set up in spring 2012. The members of the committee will be representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of the Environment; the National Board of Patents and Registrations of Finland; the Tax Administration; a number of non-profit organisations; organisations from Finnish civil society; researchers, academics and experts; and social partners.

From 2007-2011, the committee's main task was to explore the ways in which the work of non-profit organisations could be made easier. It also looked at how to overcome the barriers faced by non-profit organisations in their activities. Importantly, this included a clarification of the administrative challenges that have arisen from EU regulation, especially in relation to taxation rules concerning service delivery by non-profit organisations. The developments it will take forward will have relevance to voluntary organisations in the country. Experts have highlighted the importance and the uniqueness of the committee, in that so many different stakeholders from public and third sector spheres are working closely together to tackle problems that hinder the work of voluntary organisations.



Four of the committee's working groups had particular relevance to voluntary organisations:

- *The working group on taxation, which explored ways of solving problems relating to the taxation of non-profit organisations;*
- *The working group looking at issues around public procurement and service delivery by non-profit organisations, as well as the impact of public procurement rules on voluntary organisations, and disadvantaged groups;*
- *The working group on research, which aimed to map out the situation of Finnish civil society and report on the needs and challenges faced by the sector;*
- *The working group on the financial situation of non-profit organisations.*

The Citizen Forum (Kansalaisareena) has also established a programme, the aim of which is to formulate a national strategy on volunteering. The goal is to develop a common understanding of volunteering, to define good practice in volunteering, to gain political support, secure future support and importantly include grassroots level voluntary organisations in the process of strategic planning of volunteering at the national level.

For this target, a support group on volunteering was set up in the Finnish Parliament in 2009.

The Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007-2011 (Lapsi- ja nuorisopolitiikan kehittämisohjelma) highlighted the importance of integrating an element of volunteering into secondary level education in Finland. The programme stressed the significance of understanding the importance of volunteering from a young age.

National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering

There are no quantitative targets in relation to volunteering in Finland. However, the Committee to enhance cooperation between civil society and public administration (KANE) had a few qualitative targets in relation to volunteering, including the taxation of non-profit organisations; public procurement and service delivery by non-profit organisations, voluntary organisations, volunteers and disadvantaged groups; needs and challenges faced by voluntary organisations; and the financial situation of non-profit organisations.

Programmes

Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level

Volunteer brokerage services and sector specific umbrella organisations, such as the Finnish Sports Federation, Allianssi, Kansalaisareena, help to promote volunteering.

A new *national brokerage portal*, www.vapaaehtoiseksi.fi, was designed to function as a national brokerage platform between organisations looking for volunteers and individuals interested in volunteering. The Finnish Slot Machine Association (RAY)¹, which is the main funder of social and health care associations², did get the funding for developing the portal to the Finnish Centre for Health Promotion (and SOTSE, the Finnish Society for Social Welfare and Health in 2012). However, the portal is not functioning.

The Citizen Forum (Kansalaisareena) is running preparatory programmes between 2007 and 2012 to introduce a horizontal, national strategy for volunteering. At the moment most of the development work takes place within sectors. However, the aim is to develop joined-up, national level co-operation in the field of volunteering that aims to benefit the sector as a whole, and not only volunteering in certain sectors.

The preparatory programmes will continue with strategy programmes for volunteering between 2012 and 2015. They will continue to be led by the Citizen Forum with key partners. The overall aim is to involve grass-root level voluntary organisations in the planning and development of volunteering in the country, and thereby improve the foundation and the infrastructure of volunteering. The programmes aim to cover networking; brokerage services; awareness raising; the image of volunteering; legislation; co-operation between municipalities, companies and voluntary organisations; boundaries between voluntary and professional paid work; good practices in volunteering; information and data on volunteering; and the impact and value of volunteering.

Key transnational programmes that stimulate volunteering at transnational level

Allianssi Youth Exchanges is a youth exchange agency providing young Finns opportunities to work abroad. Every year around one thousand young Finns volunteer abroad and around 100 international volunteers come to volunteer in Finland.

The Finnish Volunteer Programme (ETVO) is a volunteering programme led by The Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA). It channels volunteers to non-governmental



Kansalaisareena - The Citizen Forum - is running preparatory programmes between 2007 and 2012 to introduce a horizontal, national strategy for volunteering.

1. <https://www.ray.fi/en/ray>

2. (The Finnish Slot Machine Association has a monopoly on money raised through gambling games in Finland. The Finnish Government will distribute MEUR 291 of RAY profits as grants to health and social welfare non-profit organisations in 2012).

organisations in the South (mostly in developing countries). The purpose of the programme is to enhance dialogue between the South and the North and to strengthen the partnership between the two. The intention is for the involvement of Finnish NGOs to help the volunteers to become active members of civil society when they return to Finland. ETVO has been active since 1995, and it has no political or religious affiliations. The volunteers have worked, for example, in environmental conservation, with street children and with people with disabilities. The volunteering period varies from six to twelve months.

The Finnish Branch of Service Civil International (KVT) is a peace organisation that aims at promoting equality, social acceptance and respect for the environment. The most important activities include the organisation of international work camps in Finland and sending Finnish volunteers to work abroad.

International Cultural Youth Exchange, ICYE (Maailmanvaihto) is an international non-profit youth exchange organisation promoting youth mobility, intercultural learning and international voluntary service.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

There is no legal definition of volunteering and a range of different definitions are currently used. Leading third sector researchers Marianne Nylund and Anne Birgitta Pessi define volunteering as “unpaid activity from free will for the benefit of others, which often takes place in an organised setting”³.

Kansalaisareena has defined volunteering as “all activity carried out for the public good, which is based on civic movement and voluntary action and is not paid for”. The key words uniting most definitions are: unpaid activity, for the benefit of others, not relatives and action taken out of free will.

Sometimes organised volunteering is differentiated from informal activities like neighbourly help⁴. It is in fact increasingly common to describe volunteering as an activity that encompasses both organised and non-organised spheres of civic activity.

A survey in 2002⁵ indicated that 37% of Finnish people aged 15-74 years had been involved in volunteering over the 12 months preceding the survey. This equates to around 1.3 million people. In 2010, in a study based on a survey of 994 individuals, 36 % of the Finnish population aged between 15-79 years had been involved in volunteering over the 4 weeks preceding the survey. This data is representative (3 % margin of error)⁶.

Furthermore, in a very similar manner, the European Values Survey reported that in 1999/2000 36% of individuals carried out voluntary work in at least one association (excluding trade unions and political parties)⁷, with Finland having the sixth highest rate of volunteering in Europe.

There has been relatively little change in the number of volunteers in Finland. However, the time spent volunteering is decreasing: in 2002 it was 18 hours/month and in 2010 it was only 13.4 hours/month.

3. Palkaton, vapaasta tahdosta kumpuava yleishyödyllinen toiminta, joka useimmiten on organisoitunut jonkin tahonavustuksella.”

4. Hilger, P. (2006) Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts. Urban Research Unit.

5. Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

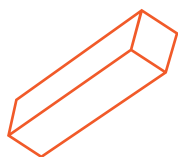
6. Kansalaisareena & Taloustutkimus (2010)

7. European Values Study, 1999/2000, as reported by Bogdan & Mălina Voicu in 2003.

According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2006 on European Social Reality⁸, half (50%) of the Finnish population actively participate in voluntary work. This figure is well above the EU-25 average of 34% and represents the fifth highest level of participation out of all EU-27 Member States.

Research carried out in 2002⁷ indicated that 62% of volunteers were involved in an organised form of volunteering, such as carrying out voluntary work for a voluntary association or organisation. The rest carried out voluntary activities in an informal sphere.

Interviewees have noted that levels of volunteering have remained relatively stable, with some modest increases over recent years. However, growth in the number of new voluntary organisations has led to a feeling of competition for volunteers amongst them. This has left some stakeholders believing that the number of volunteers has actually decreased, whereas in fact there has been relatively little change. However, the time spent volunteering is decreasing: in 2002 it was 18 hours a month and in 2010 it was 13.4 hours per month⁹.



There is not a great overall difference between the amount of volunteering carried out by men and women in Finland¹⁰. However, the 1999/2000 and 2009 Time Use Survey¹¹ suggested that slightly more men had participated in volunteering during the four weeks preceding the survey. Yet amongst those who do volunteer, it is women who generally spend slightly more time volunteering: around 19.5 hours a month, as opposed to around 16 hours among men.

Data from the 1999/2000 and 2009 Time Use Survey suggested that adults are the most active group, especially in sectors that rely heavily on volunteers such as the sport sector. There is also evidence to suggest that older people are increasingly participating in voluntary activities, as they are more active and enjoy better health than previous older generations. Changes have been detected in the type of voluntary activity carried out by young people. There are signs that many young people are now less interested in carrying out voluntary activities that concern their immediate surroundings. Instead many are interested in global issues such as environmental protection and volunteering in third world countries. Furthermore, their engagement is not necessarily linked to membership of an association. Instead, more and more young people are carrying out activities on a non-formal basis without being members of the organisations for which they are volunteering.

There are some regional differences in the level of volunteering. According to a 2002 survey on volunteering, led by Anne Birgitta Yeung, the highest levels of volunteering have been recorded in west Finland and the lowest in the south of the country¹². The highest number of hours dedicated to volunteering can be seen in the west with an average of 25 hours per person per month and the lowest in the north with 11 hours per person per month¹³. Figures show a slight shift in volunteering from being a more common activity in towns, villages and rural areas, towards becoming increasingly common in metropolitan areas¹⁴.

8. European Commission (2007) Eurobarometer Report: European Social Reality. Fieldwork November – December 2006. Special Eurobarometer 273 / Wave 66.3 – TNS Opinion & Social.

9. Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

10. Ibid.

11. Iisakka, L. (2006) Social Capital in Finland – Statistical Review. Statistics Finland. Ajankäyttötutkimus 2009, Osallistuminen ja vapaaehtoistyö tilastokeskus. Suomen Virallinen Tilasto, Elinolot 2011

12. Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

13. Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

14. Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY; Iisakka, L. (2006) Social Capital in Finland – Statistical Review. Statistics Finland.

However, more recent studies from 2008 imply that participation rates of southern Finnish people in many civic activities are actually much higher than previously thought. While they are not as active in terms of organised forms of volunteering, surveys have found that they are actually the most 'helpful' individuals, being very active in helping out their friends and neighbours on an informal basis and undertaking civic activities such as donating blood¹⁵.

The 1999/2000 and 2009 Time Use Survey highlights a clear correlation between the level of volunteering seen amongst the population and level of education; put simply, the more highly educated people are, the more likely they are to participate in voluntary activities. Indeed, the highest rates of volunteering recorded are among people with tertiary level education and the lowest are among people whose highest level of education is primary education.

Volunteers in Finland are active in a wide variety of sectors ranging from sport and animal welfare, to environmental conservation and voluntary activities relating to the armed forces¹⁶. The most popular sector is sport (30%), closely followed by social and health care (25%), children and young people (22%), religious activities (16%) and community activities (10%)¹⁷.

There appear to be gender differences between the sectors¹⁸. Men tend to volunteer in the sport sector, in local and community activities, rescue services and voluntary activities linked to the armed forces. In contrast, women tend to volunteer in the social and health sectors, as well as with children and young people. In addition, age differences exist¹⁹. Young people are more likely to take part in voluntary activities related to animals, nature, environmental protection and human rights, as well as those with children and other young people. Older people are more active in the social and health sectors, religious activities and local and community activities.

Employed people are the most active group in volunteering, followed by students, pensioners, individuals who are responsible for their own household (i.e. homemakers) and finally, unemployed individuals²⁰.

On average, individuals dedicate 18 hours a month to voluntary activities, which equates to around four hours a week²¹. Time dedicated to volunteering activities is affected by an individual's age, gender and employment status: Young people (aged between 15-24 years) and older people dedicate more time to volunteering than other age groups; an average of 20 hours a month. As stated previously, women spend on average four hours more a month volunteering than men. Individuals who have only completed primary education spend the most time on voluntary activities (22 hours a month), followed by individuals with tertiary level education (17 hours), upper secondary education (16 hours) and those with vocational education (14 hours).

History and contextual background

Volunteering and voluntary engagement in community activities has existed for centuries. The first "organised" forms of voluntary engagement in the country were seen in the 1840s, with women from higher classes in society grouping together to help those less fortunate than themselves and redistribute social rights and responsibilities. One of the first major

15. Pessi, A. B. (2008) Suomalaiset auttajina ja luottamus avun lähteisiin. RAY:n juhluvuo den kansalaiskyselyjen tulokset. Avustustoiminnan Raportteja 19. RAY.

16. In Finland there is compulsory military service, but for example voluntary reservist organisations are important part of Finnish national defence.

17. Information from Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

18. Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

19. Ibid.

20. Iisakka, L. (2006) Social Capital in Finland – Statistical Review. Statistics Finland.

21. Information from: Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.



popular movements to arise in Finland was the gymnastics and sport movement; indeed, the first Finnish athletic club was founded in 1856. During the 1880s, civic activities among rural young adults began to develop along with workers' educational activities and the trade union movement. By the turn of the century youth societies had the largest membership of civic organisations in Finland; although they were overtaken in the early twentieth century by a surge in the memberships of cooperatives and workers' associations. The 1880s also saw the rise of the women's movement, religious organisations and home district associations. During the early 1900s the development of a Finnish civil society slowed down significantly as a result of internal and external pressures. However, in the 1970s there was still a strong tendency towards social

Membership based volunteering is in decline and present members of local voluntary organisations are getting older - therefore there are concerns about the future of voluntary organisations.

organisational work and many political parties, trade unions and youth organisations became increasingly active. Moreover, the role of civic organisations began to take over from popular movements; there was a strong development of organisational structures and support mechanisms; and the number of voluntary associations continued to grow. A significant change in attitude came with the economic crisis that took place in the early-mid 1990s. Public services were reorganised and there was

a rise in neo-liberalist policies that competed with traditional welfare values. A significant increase in voluntary organisations was seen in social and health service fields as budget cuts led to increased responsibilities for municipalities²². Voluntary activities once again became a core element of Finnish society and attention was paid to the role of voluntary organisations in creating employment. Today, although people still believe strongly in the welfare state²³, the voluntary sector has also found an important place in society.

Voluntary work in the country has been characterised by a focus on membership. In fact, around 75%-80% of the Finnish are members of a voluntary organisation(s) in their lifetime, and many individuals hold membership of several different organisations over the course of their lifetime. Helander and Laaksonen (1999) estimated that the average Finn is a member of three different organisations. This means that a significant part of voluntary work is performed within the framework of an organisation. Nevertheless, *talkoot* (working together for a common goal in a specific time period), together with other informal forms of volunteering such as neighbourly help, has been and continues to be widespread.

Although the number of voluntary organisations remains high, membership based volunteering is in decline. Members of local voluntary organisations are getting older and therefore there are concerns around the future of voluntary organisations. There are no signs of a lower level of involvement in volunteering, or less interest, but Finnish people, particularly the younger generation, now prefer to determine the level of their involvement. They speak more openly about what they want to achieve with their voluntary engagement and volunteers are more likely to switch from one voluntary organisation to another. There is also more interest in project based volunteering.



22. Ruohonen, 2003 in Hilger, P. (2006) *Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki*. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Urban Research Unit

23. Kosiaho, 2001 in Hilger, P. (2006) *Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki*. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Urban Research Unit.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

There is no specific legal framework for volunteering in Finland. Volunteering is regulated by a number of laws, including:

- *Associations Act 894/2002 (26.5.1989/503) (Yhdistyslaki)*
- *Co-operatives Act 1488/2001 (Osuuskuntalaki)*
- *Foundations Act 248/2001 (Säätiölaki)*
- *Accounting Act 300/1998 (Kirjanpitolaki)*
- *Lotteries Act 23.11.2001/1047 (Arpajaislaki)*
- *Youth Act 27.1.2006/72 (Nuorisolaki)*
- *Sport Act 18.12.1998/1054 (Liikuntalaki)*
- *Occupational Safety and Health Act (23 Aug 2002/738)*
- *Act on Rescue Services (13 June 2003/468)*

No code of conduct exists at the moment but there are plans to create one. Finnish volunteers do not have a specific legal status. Volunteers are sometimes regarded as (corresponding to) employees and voluntary service has usually been treated according to the taxation practices of the Employment Contracts Act²⁴. According to the definition in the Employment Contracts Act, an employment contract is characterised by working for remuneration. Neighbourly help, for example, is not regarded as subject to employment contract legislation, even if the parties clearly agree on the benefits and responsibilities involved.

Everyone can volunteer, but unemployed people should inform the Public Employment Service about their voluntary engagements as voluntary work should not prevent them from taking up work or labour market training if such opportunities are made available. This means that volunteers must be able to stop their voluntary work at relatively short notice. Some stakeholders have highlighted the ambiguity of the Unemployment Security Act (Työttömyysturvalaki 30.12.2002/1290) in relation to volunteering as one of the barriers related to the development of volunteering. Some have claimed that the rules should be made clearer in this regard. There are also some implications in terms of taxation for voluntary organisations if skilled healthcare professionals, such as doctors, volunteer their time to carry out activities related to their profession.

Individual volunteers do not gain income tax exemptions or financial benefits from volunteering and there are no other financial support schemes in place to encourage people to volunteer. In principle, volunteers can be reimbursed for the expenses incurred as a result of volunteering and there are a couple of groups of volunteers in the field of child protection who get their expenses reimbursed automatically. However, the arrangements concerning reimbursements depend on the rules and practices of each sector and/or individual organisation. Reimbursement of expenses is tax-free up to a certain figure (around 2,000 EUR). In practice, this is not really an issue as the expenses are low-cost items, such as travel costs. Furthermore, tax rules are rather unclear with regards to this matter; each tax office tends to treat this differently. Some volunteers are given a nominal payment for their voluntary work, especially sport coaches. This must be declared and is taxable income.

24. Youth Partnership (2009) Voluntary activities, Finland.

Organisations do not need to notify public authorities of their volunteers. Provided that they are carrying out activities for the public good, voluntary organisations do not need to pay income tax, value added tax (VAT) or property tax on their earnings²⁵. This means that income gained through fundraising, donations, membership fees etc is not taxable income. For a non-profit organisation to be eligible for these tax benefits, it must meet the following requirements:

- It operates fully and only for the public good, in the material, spiritual, educational or social sense
- Its activities are not directed to an exclusive group of people only
- Those involved do not gain financial benefits such as dividends, profits shares, high salaries or other compensation for participating in the activities of the organisation²⁶.

Around two-thirds of voluntary organisations are eligible for the above-mentioned exemptions²⁷. If a non-profit organisation is engaged in delivering services on behalf of a public or private organisation its status changes. It must pay taxes on such income, although organisations can apply for tax relief on operational and fundraising income. However, these taxation rules are unclear at the moment (some non-profit organisations have privatised their service delivery activities, others continue to deliver services, etc). As previously mentioned, a government working group KANE has been established to clarify these rules. There are no subsidies linked to establishing voluntary organisations.

There are some private company specific schemes to promote volunteering, and some ministries have also established “volunteering days”. Also, many large companies, especially Nokia and Telia-Sonera, support the voluntary sector through significant levels of sponsorship. Employers are responsible for the insurance and protection of an employee if s/he carries out voluntary work during working hours. It is not a legal obligation for voluntary organisations to provide insurance but in practice almost all voluntary organisations insure their volunteers. The volunteer insurance system is well developed, easily available and relatively inexpensive. One of the best insurance schemes is available in the sport sector.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEERING

It must be highlighted that there is a debate with regard to which organisational types can be categorised as voluntary organisations. This is also linked to the ever greater role of voluntary organisations involved in the delivery of public services. Therefore, some parties are demanding greater clarification of third sector organisations based on voluntary activity and third sector organisations involved in service delivery. There are several different types of organisational structures as summarised in the table below²⁸.

There are no exact figures available on the number of voluntary organisations, but information is available on the number of the main type of voluntary organisations, namely associations. Given the relatively small size of Finland, there is a high density of voluntary organisations within the country. In total there are 127,000 registered associations, although only around 67,000

25. Harju, A. (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

26. Ibid.

27. Educational Association Citizen's Forum SKAF, Kansalaisfoorumi

28. Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

of those were active in 2007²⁹. In addition, there are around 30,000 unregistered voluntary associations, citizen groups and networks³⁰.

Types of organisations	
Associations	A local registered or unregistered society, consisting of individual members. Often the term is used synonymously with organisation.
Organisations	A national ensemble made up of local associations, district organisations and a federation.
Federations	An entity formed of associations and operating at a national level.
Religious organisations	Activities of many churches are organised in associations (excluding the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church).
Trade unions	Sometimes included in the categories of voluntary organisations. Their organisational structure is similar to that of other Finnish voluntary organisations (associations), and they have large local networks, they carry out local level activity, have significant memberships and involve voluntary work.
Political parties	In a similar manner to trade unions, political parties are not always included in categories of voluntary organisations but their operations are regulated by the Associations Act and they involve volunteers.
Cooperatives	Small-scale co-operatives, which are not primarily profit-driven entities, are included as voluntary organisations. The number of co-operatives grew by 86% between 1994 and 2003.
Foundations	There were 2,700 foundations in Finland in 2007. There are two different types of foundations in Finland; grant (apuraha) and operational foundations (toiminnallisia/laitos).
Spontaneous alliances between citizens	This can include for example, popular movements, and unregistered groups, clubs and societies and other spontaneous alliances between people

The majority of voluntary organisations are active at the local level; in 2006, only 1,000 were national organisations and a further 3,000 were district/regional organisations. Most voluntary organisations are found in the culture and recreation sectors, followed by the health sector and business and professional associations and unions, as shown in the table below³¹:

Sector	Number of organisations
Culture and recreation	28,000
Health	13,000
Business and Professional Associations, Unions	12,000
Philanthropic Intermediaries and Voluntarism Promotion	11,000
Education and Research	4,500

29. Based on information from the National Board of Patents and Registration of Finland (Patentti- ja rekisterihallitus).

30. Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

31. Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of voluntary organisations in Finland over the past few years and more new voluntary organisations have been established this decade than ever before. There was an increase of more than 15% between 2006 and 2007 alone: the number of associations increased from 110,000 in 2006 to 127,000 in 2007. The record year was 1997 when ten new associations were registered daily. The biggest increases have been seen in the number of leisure and hobby organisations; sport and exercise clubs; cultural associations; environmental and ecological organisations; social and health organisations; and village and district associations. One of the main reasons for this surge in numbers is that, in order to access funding, an organisation must be registered as a non-profit association³².

A major challenge for the future is linked to the ageing population. Many voluntary organisations are heavily reliant on people aged 50 years and over to fulfil leading and management positions in a voluntary capacity. Data shows that around 80% of voluntary organisations do not have employees. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the older an organisation is, the more likely it is to have employees.

In the future, voluntary organisations are expected to become more reliant on paid staff and are likely to become more professional and commercially orientated³³. As a result it is likely that they will place greater emphasis on strategic planning, targets, efficiency and productivity. Moreover, they are likely to rely increasingly on self-funding rather than on subsidies.

The voluntary sector accounts for the majority of organisations involving volunteers (99%), with only a very small proportion of voluntary activity reported in the public or private sector (both under 1%)³⁴. Around two thirds of volunteers take part in organised volunteering through voluntary organisations, the remaining one third volunteer through informal channels (such as, neighbourly help, *talkoot*).

A more detailed description of organisations in Finland that employ volunteers is provided below. It is a grouping of 17 categories covering a range of different activities and sectors³⁵.

Groups

Sport and exercise clubs

In Finland most sport activity takes place in sport clubs and there is a trend towards an increasing number of clubs connected to one specific sport.

Cultural associations

There has been an increase in the number of cultural associations over recent years and, like sport clubs, many are focused on one particular theme (i.e. different art forms, the preservation of the local community, promoting multicultural dialogue, etc).

Leisure and hobby organisations

These cover a wide range of different activities and act as a common platform through which individuals can meet like-minded people and demonstrate their skills (i.e. pet associations, dance associations, car and boat clubs, etc).

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32. Kansalaisareena, 2009.

33. Yeung, A. B. (2002), *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

34. Information from: Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

35. Harju, A. (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

Groups

Social and health associations	These often relate to their members' interests and offer peer support and professional help (i.e. the Finnish Red Cross, associations for people with disabilities, child welfare organisations, etc).
Youth organisations and student societies	Youth work is a core element of Finnish not-for-profit sector activity.
Political organisations	Political parties in Finland have local organisations in villages, municipalities and districts. Some also have women's organisations or federations, as well as child and youth organisations and educational and cultural associations.
Trade unions	Over the past few decades there has been a reduction in interest in trade union activities. Nevertheless most occupations are represented by trade unions and some have trade organisations with locally or regionally based activities.
Economic and industrial associations	Most medium and large enterprises belong to a national confederation and smaller companies/entrepreneurs have their own interest groups.
Advisor organisations	These have a long history in Finland, especially in rural areas.
Religious and ideological associations	Different religious groups have associations, but membership is relatively small.
Pedagogical, scientific and study organisations	In Finland, scientific organisations, teachers' organisations, educational and study organisations and the support groups of educational institutions have their own organisations.
Ecological associations	These have appeared relatively recently and cover a wide range of different areas (i.e. animal welfare, nature conservation, bird watching, etc).
Pensioner and veteran organisations	Many veteran organisations date back to involvement in the Second World War thus membership numbers are gradually decreasing. In contrast, pensioner organisations are growing rapidly as the population in Finland ages.
Village and local organisations	In recent years these organisations have focused on supporting local development with state and EU funding.
National defence and peace organisations	These organisations are typically male dominated and interest in voluntary national defence has grown over recent years. There has also been an increased participation of women. (In Finland military service is still compulsory and people are interested to continue their involvement on a voluntary basis). Peace organisations, in contrast, currently have relatively low levels of membership.

(Continued on next page)

Groups

Friendship societies, ethnic organisations and development cooperation organisations

Friendship societies often bring together people from different countries and cultures (i.e. League of Finnish American Societies, Finland-Russia Society, and the Finnish-Arab Friendship Society). The aim is to foster good relations, disseminate information and organise cultural events, trips and language courses.

Service organisations

Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs are found throughout Finland. They focus on charitable work and providing aid through either financial support or voluntary work.

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

There are a number of government bodies which support volunteering as part of their wider responsibilities in Finland, mainly by funding third sector organisations. These public bodies include:

- *Ministry of Education (voluntary activities related to youth, culture and sport sectors)*
- *Ministry of Justice (regulations, and leading the new inter-ministerial, multi-agency working group on civil society and volunteering, KANE - see Section 2.2)*
- *Ministry of Foreign Affairs (international development, volunteering abroad, especially in third world countries)*
- *Ministry of Interior (volunteering in rescue services)*
- *Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (volunteering in social and health sectors)*
- *Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (issues related to rural development)*
- *Ministry of Finance (taxation issues)*
- *Ministry of Employment and the Economy (employment programmes from which voluntary organisations can benefit, e.g. labour market subsidy programmes for the unemployed).*

The most important ministries with competences in volunteering are the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Other important players are the three gaming organisations, which are the only three operators allowed to operate in the Finnish gaming market. Under the Lotteries Act, the task of three gaming organisations - RAY (Finland's Slot Machine Association, which supports the work of health and welfare organisations), Veikkaus (the Finnish lottery, which supports art, sport, science and youth work) and Fintoto - is to raise funds through gaming operations to support the work of voluntary organisations. This monopoly situation is the backbone of the Finnish voluntary sector as it ensures a sustainable form of funding for the sector. The gaming organisations also have a duty of social responsibility and an obligation to prevent gambling problems.

The role of municipalities in relation to volunteering is four-dimensional. Municipalities offer facilities, sometimes free of charge, sometimes at a discounted rate, for the use of voluntary organisations. For example in the sport sector, about three-quarters of sport facilities are run by municipalities. Municipalities also support the voluntary movement by playing an

important role in the development and delivery of training to many people involved in volunteering. Municipalities are also becoming increasingly important partners for many voluntary organisations which provide services for them and operate on funding granted by the municipalities.

Most organisations that promote volunteering are sectoral organisations that carry out promotional and development work related to volunteering among their other activities. Only a small number of organisations focus on the development of volunteering alone. Some of the most important types of organisation that are involved in the promotion of volunteering and exchange of information in the field of volunteering include the following organisations and networks:

The Citizen Forum (Kansalaisareena) is a service development and information centre for voluntary actors in Finland. It promotes active citizenship and voluntary activity, and acts as a service centre for volunteers, voluntary organisations and professionals working in the field of volunteering. It works with grassroots level voluntary organisations.

The *Educational Association Citizen's Forum Kansalaisfoorumi* promotes and develops Finnish civil society.

There are many organisations that offer *volunteer brokerage services (vapaaehtoisvälitys)*³⁶. In addition to their other activities, they aim to unite voluntary organisations looking for volunteers and people who wish to volunteer.

Members of Parliament have opened a *support group on volunteering*. The group is facilitated by the Citizen Forum (Kansalaisareena), and the members of the group are expected to raise awareness about issues affecting voluntary organisations and volunteers, and help to promote the volunteering agenda.

The *Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi* is a key player in the youth sector and works with voluntary youth organisations to promote and facilitate volunteering in the youth sector. Youth Academy (*Nuorten Akatemia*) is another organisation supporting voluntary organisations and voluntary activities in the youth sector. *Young Advocates (Nuoret vaikuttajat)* is an organisation of Finland's Youth Councils, providing information and education, and serves as a platform for co-operation.

The co-operation association of social and health service organisations *YTY (Sosiaali- ja terveystyöjärjestöjen Yhteistyöyhdistys, www.sostertyty.fi)* operated as an umbrella organisation for its 121 national members. The *Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health (Sosiaali- ja terveysturvan keskusliitto)* was another federation in social and health care fields. The *Finnish Centre for Health Promotion (www.health.fi)* was a cooperation network bringing together organisations of different fields (public health, education, disabled services, social services). It aimed to promote the health and wellbeing of citizens through dissemination of information and knowledge. All these three umbrella organisations unified at the start of 2012 under one organisation, *SOSTE (Suomen sosiaali ja terveys ry)* the Finnish Society for Social Welfare and Health (www.soste.fi).

36. Hilger, P. (2008) A case of human service dominance: volunteer centres in Finland. Paper prepared for the 'Volunteering Infrastructure and Civil Society' Conference, Aalsmeer, the Netherlands, 24-25 April 2008.

The *Evangelic-Lutheran church* plays an important role in Finnish society, both as a civil activity forum and an organiser of services, including voluntary activities.

Finnish sport organisations and federations are in charge of organising the voluntary activities related to sport. The *Finnish Sport Federation (Suomen Liikunta ja Urheilu ry, SLU)* is the umbrella organisation that provides support for all its 125 member organisations (national and regional sport organisations). Its main aim is to support volunteering-based, non-profit civic activity in sport. Its member organisations and federations in turn bring together and provide support for grassroots level sport clubs, which are heavily dominated by volunteers (the majority of all volunteers in the sport sector are active in sport clubs).

The *Service Centre for Development Cooperation (Kehitysyhteistyön palvelukeskus)* is an umbrella organisation for Finnish NGOs involved in development or other global issues.

Kansalaisareena (Citizen Forum) is a member of CEV, the European Volunteer Centre³⁷. The youth, health and sport federations are also affiliated to the relevant European umbrella organisations.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

There is no national budget allocation to volunteering as such, but the public sector supports voluntary organisations, for example by enabling activities of national federations and umbrella organisations. The turnover of voluntary sector organisations is approximately 5 billion EUR³⁸. Around 32% (1.6 billion EUR) comes from public sources. The largest amount of funding goes to social and health organisations. The state funding provided for many voluntary organisations and federations come from the proceeds of the gaming industry, as regulated by the Lotteries Act (23.11.2001/1047). Only a small percentage of voluntary sector funding comes from budgetary funds; funds are largely from the gaming industry, and this is the reason why Finnish actors feel strongly about the need for member states to be able to decide on their own gaming policies. It is expected that the Finnish voluntary movement would suffer significantly if the gaming industry in Finland were to be opened to competition. It is expected that the level of funding for the voluntary sector would reduce and thereby weaken the volunteering infrastructure in the country as a whole.

Finally, a significant form of public support for sport is the tax-free nature of volunteer work. As stated earlier, non-profit organisations do not need to pay taxes on the income gained through fundraising, donations, membership fees and suchlike, provided that no one receives direct personal benefit from it but all funds are used for 'common good' - to support activities for the entire club or team.

The sources of funding for Finnish voluntary organisations are:

- *Membership fees*
- *Fundraising*
- *Donations*
- *Benefits in-kind (e.g. use of facilities for free of charge, voluntary workforce)*
- *Income from service provision*
- *Selling of products*
- *Income from advertisements (e.g. in magazines of voluntary organisations)*

37. www.cev.be

38. Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

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- *Agreements with private companies*
- *Funding through national gaming organisations (e.g. Veikkaus, Fintoto and RAY)*
- *Grants from local and national authorities*
- *European Union (EU) funds*
- *Project funding*
- *Capital income (e.g. rent income, etc).*

Often the most important funding sources include own funding (e.g. membership fees and fundraising), donations and service delivery and public funding. However, sectoral differences are apparent in funding sources of voluntary organisations. For example, membership fees are crucial for voluntary social and health organisations while sport organisations benefit more from private sponsorship than most other voluntary organisations. Religious organisations tend to benefit from private donations. Voluntary youth organisations are funded by state subsidies (28%), EU funds, foundations and other ministries (19%), and private sources such as membership fees, donations and fundraising (53%)³⁹.

Overall, Finnish voluntary organisations are more dependent on self-financing than their counterparts in many other European countries; the proportion of state funding is relatively low. Own fundraising emphasises the central role of members and enhances the autonomy of the sector⁴⁰. No tensions were identified between the state aid rules and allocation of grants and subsidies to voluntary organisations. This is due to a long tradition of voluntary sector activity. Funding arrangements for voluntary organisations are deemed transparent.

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)

Public services were reorganised after the recession of the mid / early 1900s. Aaro Harju reports that *'Finland moved from the welfare state thinking to the idea of a pluralistic welfare society'*⁴¹.

According to this theory, the responsibility for a welfare society is shared between several different actors. In fact, a significant increase in voluntary organisations was seen in social and health service fields as budget cuts led to increased responsibilities for municipalities⁴². Growing numbers of voluntary organisations started to deliver services for municipalities, for example, in the field of domestic support, support for the elderly, services for the disabled, etc.

Today, just over 50% of member organisations of YTY (which represent voluntary organisations in social and health care sectors) are involved in service delivery⁴³. Eleven out of 102 respondents had established a company to deliver these services in 2006/2007.

Voluntary organisations provide about 17% of social services and 5% of health services. The figures for the public sector are 67% and 83%, and 6% and 12% for the private sector, respectively. In 2000, voluntary organisations in the field of health and social affairs employed 11% of all staff in the health and social sector⁴⁴. The share of staff employed by the state was 81% and 8% by the private sector. There need to be clearer rules on taxation of voluntary organisations that deliver SSGI because at the moment tax offices apply the rules differently (see Section 7 for further information).



39. Ministry of Education, 2009.

40. Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

41. Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation. Page 30.

42. Ruohonen, 2003 in Hilger, P. (2006) Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Urban Research Unit.

43. Lyytikäinen, M. (2008) Palvelutuotanto YTY:n jäsenyhteisöissä vuonna 2008. Sähköisen kyselyn yhteenveto. Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden Yhteistyöyhdistys YTY ry.

44. Ylä-Anttila, T. (2006) Kansalaisjärjestöt rakentavat vahvempaa demokratiaa. www.kansanvalta.fi

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

More research on volunteering in Finland is needed given the significance of volunteering in the country as a whole.

8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

There are no specified and commonly used ethics or quality standards for volunteering in Finland even though needs for these are recognised.

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

A range of developments are taking place to tackle some of the challenges identified above. These include, for example:

- *Introduction of the new volunteer portal which allows organisations to promote their voluntary positions and potential volunteers to search for voluntary opportunities*
- *In order to increase volunteering among young people, it has been proposed that voluntary organisations and volunteering should become a part of compulsory education. One of the two weeks for 'working life familiarisation' could be spent working in voluntary organisations or as a volunteer⁴⁵*
- *The Citizen Forum is working on a national strategy for volunteering, which would provide a joined-up framework for voluntary activities in Finland*

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

There are no country specificities not otherwise specified.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Future challenges in Finland include:

- *Permanent funding of the national volunteer centres,*
- *Permanent funding of local volunteer centres,*
- *Clarification of rules, laws, acts and instructions concerning volunteering,*
- *Enlargement of the national volunteering development network to all areas in Finland,*
- *Raising interesting volunteering themes as a common discussion and enabling thematic development and cooperation,*
- *Establishment of volunteering in schools and learning institutions as part of curricula,*
- *Enabling the establishment of a nation-wide internet-based search tool for finding suitable voluntary work,*

45. www.kansanvalta.fi

- *Development of models and establishment of guidance for NGOs and public and private organisations about employer supported volunteering,*
- *Training of volunteering coordinators and professionals to be established in Finnish learning system and institutions,*
- *Development of quality standards and a certification system for regional volunteer centres in Finland,*
- *Research on the significance of volunteering infrastructure in the society,*
- *Establishment of volunteering infrastructure and new ways of horizontal networking both on local and on national level,*
- *Establishment of international cooperation between networks.*



Resources

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